

FINLAND

the facts



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FINLAND — THE FACTS

THOUSANDS of people are thinking and talking about Finland and Russia. The newspapers have spread the news of the war in Finland all over their front pages. Millionaire newspaper owners who preached non-intervention when Germany and Italy attacked Spain, when Japan attacked China, and when Italy seized Albania, are denouncing the U.S.S.R. for "attacking a little country." Newspapers which maintained a majestic impartiality when Italian bombers were killing hundreds of Spanish women and children, as a deliberate policy, exhaust all the resources of the dictionary for strong language in denouncing Soviet "barbarism" in bombing open towns and inflicting casualties on civilians which, in all probability, have been caused by falling shrapnel from Finnish anti-aircraft shells. They have not hesitated in conjunction with the B.B.C. to spread the report—promptly exposed by the Soviet Government as a malicious lie—that Soviet airmen have machine-gunned civilians in the streets.

Why this change? Why such rage? The answer is that the Soviet advance means a crushing defeat for 22 years of plotting by British, American and German millionaires and their Governments, and undoes all the work carried out in 1918, when a capitalist Government was set up in Finland on the bones of 30,000 massacred men, women and children of the Finnish working class. It is a defeat for the cause of the rich, and a victory for the cause of the workers represented by the Soviet Union.

"But isn't Finland a model democracy?" Someone may ask. The fact is that Finland is not what the newspapers have represented, and the issues involved between Finland and the Soviet Union are quite different from the picture drawn in the press.

What is behind it all ?

There have been one or two tentative hints of this. "Can we suppose that Stalin is afraid that Germany's defeat by Britain and France will lead to a new coalition against Bolshevism, and wishes to dig himself in impregnably on the Baltic against such a contingency?" wrote the *Yorkshire Post*, November 29. "It is believed in some well-informed circles that the Soviet Government fear (fantastic as the idea seems) an eventual re-grouping of the Powers, including a non-Nazi Germany, on an anti-Soviet front," said the Diplomatic Correspondent of the *Times* on December 1.

"But surely the only danger to Russia comes from Germany?" some other reader may ask. "Surely you are not suggesting that, in demanding a strategic point at the entrance to the Gulf of Finland, the Soviet Union was taking action to protect itself against Britain and her allies?" That is the very suggestion we are making. This pamphlet has been written to supply you with the facts that prove it.

Finland—a Tsarist colony granted independence by the U.S.S.R.

First, what was Finland before the war of 1914? A colony of Tsarist Russia, with a more or less democratic constitution. But every time the Finns tried to use their constitution to bring about radical improvements, the Tsar's police and military stepped in.

What was Finland after the first revolution of March, 1917, when Tsardom was swept away, and a Liberal-Socialist Government under Kerensky ruled Russia? Still a colony. The Kerensky Government insisted on control of Finnish foreign and military affairs. In July, 1917, when the Finnish Parliament claimed the right to do without a Governor-General, the Kerensky Government dissolved it.

How did Finland become an independent State? By the act of the Soviet Government, set up in November 1917, which decreed the independence of all the former subject nationalities of Russia, including the right of full separation. A Soviet

decree of January 4, 1918, formally recognised Finnish independence.

Ever since then the Soviet Government has respected Finnish independence, although it has had to put up with so much provocation that any other Great Power would long ago have retaliated. In November 1921, the Finnish Government permitted military adventurers to send battalions of volunteers into Soviet Russia to raid and to try to raise a peasants' insurrection. After the failure of this attempt, it allowed the organisers to conduct open propaganda in Finland for similar ventures to acquire territory for a "Greater Finland up to the Urals."

Many such acts of provocation characterise these years, but the U.S.S.R. firmly maintained its friendly relations with Finland, never taking advantage of its rapidly growing strength, and keeping rigidly to its non-aggression Pact with Finland signed in 1932.

This was not because the Soviet Government had any reason to respect Finland as a land of democracy of freedom for the workers. On the contrary. Finland ever since April, 1918 has been ruled, sometimes with methods of bloody massacre and sometimes "merely" with police terror and occasional assassinations of workers' leaders, by a combination of landowners, manufacturers, timber-exporters and financiers, organised for parliamentary purposes in the Conservative Party, for military purposes in the Finnish General Staff and the leading officers of the Army, as well as in the Finnish police and "Defence Corps." This last body, numbering some 200,000, is drawn mainly from the richer peasants and middle class young men, and is a direct successor of the "White Guards" which massacred the Finnish workers and overthrew the Finnish Workers' Government in 1918.

Finnish Workers' Government suppressed

For though you would not suspect it from the fulsome praise of the present Finnish democracy in the *News Chronicle* and the *Daily Herald*, there was a Finnish Workers' Government. It was set up by the Finnish workers' own local Soviets

on January 28, 1918. These Soviets were formed by workers and peasants in March and April 1917, and were in full sympathy with the second revolution of November 1917. It is hardly to be surprised at, therefore, that the Finnish Soviets set up their own Government as soon as the country was given its independence by Soviet Russia.

But the capitalists and landlords, with a handful of Tsarist officers, whose leader was General Mannerheim, had retired to Northern Finland, where the Workers' Government did not pursue them effectively. From there, whilst raising the richer peasants in arms against the Workers' Government, they sent an appeal to Germany to intervene. A German division under General von der Goltz landed, twelve thousand strong, at Hango. Its great victories over the Reds contributed to Mannerheim's decisive victories in April 1918, we learn from the "Encyclopaedia Britannica." The fact is that Soviet Russia was too weak during these months to give any effective help to the Finnish Soviet Government.

This cost the Finnish Soviet Republic its life. Its army was dispersed, its leaders killed or forced to flee, and its capital was occupied. Then began a great slaughter. The "Encyclopaedia Britannica" tells us that in this White Terror, "some 15,000 men, women and children were slaughtered." On February 11, 1919, the *Times* reported that "out of about 80,000 Red prisoners taken at the end of April, or subsequently arrested, more than 30,000 men and women are dead."

So-called Finnish "Democracy"

That was the beginning of what the newspapers now ask you to call "Finnish democracy." Its future was to be worthy of such a beginning. The Communists, of course, were illegal from the outset. But at the first elections, in October 1922, 27 "Left workers" were elected. In October 1923, the Red M.P.s were all arrested and their Party suppressed. In 1924, nevertheless, working under another name, the Reds secured 18 seats. They were all arrested. Hounded and persecuted, without a legal press, and with the "Yellow" socialists given every police assistance, the Reds had nevertheless by 1930

secured the overwhelming leadership of the General Federation of Trade Unions with a membership exceeding 150,000. With the help of the International Federation of Trade Unions, an anti-Red split was engineered, but the splitters only secured about 15,000 members, as the I.F.T.U. Report itself shows. The aid of "Finnish democracy" was called in. The entire Trade Union movement was suppressed. Its leaders were assassinated or deported. After a suitable interval, the Social-Democrats were given their chance to organise "loyal" Trade Unions, which, to this day, have barely 90,000 members.

Fascists really in control

As for the reactionaries, organised in the bodies mentioned earlier, an impartial British observer has written that there is "wide discrepancy still between the popular feeling and the executive powers. The influence which the I.K.L. (Fascist Party) and the Conservative Party still wield in all branches of administration—civil service, Army, Navy, police and in particular among the so-called "Protective Guards"—is quite incommensurate with the actual strength of these parties in Parliament. Hence the almost permanent latent danger of a coup." (*Yorkshire Post*, July 11, 1939).

"But isn't there a Social-Democratic and Liberal coalition in power? Isn't the majority in Parliament in the hands of the "Progressive" parties (143 members out of 212)?" Yes it is. The big business men and militarists who hold real power in Finland have, for some years, allowed so called "progressive" parties to exist as a screen for the real power—on condition that they remain "loyal" to big business.

One could hardly wish for a witness less prejudiced in favour of Communism or Socialism than the Helsinki correspondent of the "Daily Mail" who stated on October 17, 1939, that General Mannerheim, at that time President of the Supreme Defence Council, was the "uncrowned King of Finland." The Army was "in potential control of the country," and would have none of any Pact with the U.S.S.R.; while "the Conservative and Fascist parties remain outside

the Government and support the rabidly anti-Russian Army."

In connection with the notorious frame-up of the former leader of the Finnish Socialist Youth Antikainen, in 1934-36, the *Manchester Guardian*, *Daily Herald* and *New Statesman and Nation* printed the most scathing exposures of this "Finnish democracy." Now, with their tongues in their cheeks, they have conveniently forgotten this case, and prate about the gallant little democracy of Finland. The *Daily Herald* goes even further, and threatens Russia with "the horror that stirred the world against the Kaiser in 1914 and against Hitler in 1939," and with consequences that "might well conflict with Russia's expressed desire to remain at peace with the world."

Who is "Butcher" Mannerheim? His intrigues

A few words about Mannerheim. In 1918, as we have seen, he called in the Germans against his own people. In May, 1919, he offered to co-operate with the British Army of intervention against Soviet Russia, on condition that the important industrial town of Petrozavodsk was given to Finland. The offer was rejected, because the Russian Whites, whom Britain was then backing, were against an independent Finland. Nevertheless, Mannerheim attacked Petrozavodsk unsuccessfully. In October, 1919, he made a similar offer to Yudenitch—another "White" hope—who was supported by the British Fleet in attacking Petrograd. His offer was again declined, but he helped in another way. When, on October 12, the British and French fleets proclaimed a blockade of the Baltic Republics because they had decided to make peace with Soviet Russia, Finland, i.e., Mannerheim, also proclaimed a blockade against them.

So also in after years. In 1934, Mannerheim came to London to negotiate about fortifying the Aaland Islands, which Finland had agreed in 1921 to leave unfortified. The following year, he turned his face to Germany again, and took part in a secret conference with General Goering, the Hungarian Prime Minister and the Chairman of the Foreign

Affairs Committee of the Polish Parliament, to discuss joint action against the U.S.S.R. (*Times*, October 15, 1935). Even as recently as last July, Mannerheim was entertaining General Halder, Chief of the German General Staff, and showing him all over the military aerodromes and depots of northern and eastern Finland.

The Aaland Islands affair

Earlier in this year, a most significant incident occurred. The Finnish Government decided at last to begin the fortification of the Aaland Islands, which lie at the entrance to the Gulf of Bothnia, separating Sweden and Finland. Finland herself could not hope to hold these islands with her own scanty forces, even if they were fortified; consequently, it was certain that fortifying them meant handing them over to Germany; and Germany at that time was still talking of war on the U.S.S.R. What did the "peaceful" and "neutral" Finnish Government do? It asked all the Powers who had signed the 1921 Convention for their permission to fortify. Among them were Germany and Great Britain; and with striking accord both Governments—in spite of their deadly enmity to each other over Poland, Czechoslovakia, etc.—agreed to the fortification. The only country whom Finland did not ask was the country directly interested—the U.S.S.R. The Finnish Government merely notified the Soviet Government that the question was coming up at the League of Nations, and asked the U.S.S.R. to support the scheme. The Soviet Union naturally voted against the scheme, which meant that the Finnish Government would have to undertake the work on its own responsibility—a piece of "neutrality" from which even the Finnish Government shrank.

There were three striking features of this incident, which taken together give one the elements for judging the situation that has since arisen. One was that those "deadly enemies," Hitler and Mr. Chamberlain, could find a common ground when it was a question of menacing the security of the U.S.S.R., even though this might strengthen Germany in the Baltic. The second feature was the readiness of the "neutral"

Finnish Government to participate in any plan that might threaten the Soviet Union. The third was the immense growth in strength of the U.S.S.R. since 1921, which was sufficient to frustrate the Anglo-German-Finnish plan—if only because the Great Powers had been forced to admit the U.S.S.R. to the League of Nations in 1934.

Fascist Finland an anti-Soviet base

The question is asked "Why is there more of a menace to the U.S.S.R. to-day, as regards Leningrad, than there has been any time these last twenty years, and in particular, than there was when the Soviet-Finnish Pact of non-aggression was signed in 1932?" The answer is very simple: it is that the second European war is on and in that war all kinds of "unforeseen accidents" might happen.

But it is said "What does Russia want to guard against, surely she has blocked the way for Germany, there's no one else who could possibly threaten her." And many a cartoonist and leader writer has made merry on the subject of the "gentle stoat and bloody-thirsty rabbit." But in reality it is not, of course, aggression by the Finnish militarists on their own account that the Soviet Union has to watch. It is the peril of an attack by British and French imperialism, particularly should they succeed in substituting for Hitler a German Government that would act as a soldier of fortune for them in a new anti-Bolshevik crusade.

Don't imagine this is impossible. It has already happened once. In 1918 and 1919, the Allies saved thousands of reactionary German officers from their own soldiers so that they could be used, first against the German workers, and then against Soviet Russia; in crushing the Soviet Republics of Latvia and Estonia; and in ensuring supplies and instructors for Mannerheim.

But there is more direct evidence that, twenty years later, the Soviet Union still has to reckon with the British and French capitalists as potential enemies. If the far-famed Munich agreement, for example, meant anything it meant a free hand for Hitler in the East. When the five months'

tedious negotiations about the Anglo-French-Soviet Pact, this year, had come to their close, it was clear that the British and French decision not to allow the Red Army to cross Poland to check the Germans meant that Hitler was to overrun Poland unchecked, and reach the Soviet border in triumph. Was there not a faint chance that, in that event, he would be encouraged by sheer success to go on with his eastern war after all?

Anglo-French hostility towards U.S.S.R.

Furthermore, since the European war began, there have been ample signs of hostility to the U.S.S.R. The Soviet Union declared its neutrality. With any other Great Power in a similar position, Britain and France would have done their utmost, as in the case of the U.S.A., to secure that Power's friendship. But the British and French Governments have done nothing of the kind with regard to the U.S.S.R. They have allowed the wildest campaign against the U.S.S.R. to proceed in their press unchecked. In France, the censorship with much wider powers than here, has allowed the newspapers openly to preach war against the U.S.S.R. For weeks the British Government allowed the Soviet offer of trade negotiations to remain unanswered. Meanwhile, they fixed up a Pact of Mutual assistance with Turkey, an essential part of which was that British and French warships must be free to enter the Black Sea. Ostensibly, this was to help Rumania; but Rumania could have been easily guarded with the help of Turkey and the U.S.S.R., had Mr. Chamberlain so wished. A glance at the new map, since the Soviet advance into what was formerly the Polish Empire, will show why. But British diplomacy showed as much anxiety to keep the way open into the Black Sea, as it showed concern at the security created for the southern approach to Leningrad by the Soviet agreements with the Baltic Republics, and later at the Soviet offer on similar lines to Finland.

There is only one thing that makes sense of all these varied policies; and that is unwavering, inveterate—and twenty-two years' old—hostility to the U.S.S.R. That

hostility made itself felt, quite early in the war in the fulminations of certain provincial newspapers, like the *Leeds Mercury* and the *Belfast Telegraph*, in favour of joining forces with Germany to fight the U.S.S.R.—not at the moment, of course, but after Hitler is defeated. The same hostility appeared in the *Evening News* leader when it declared that “Stalinism” as well as “Hitlerism” or “Kaiserism,” must be killed, and that the war must go on till this happens. It spoke through *The Times* editorial that called Germany and Russia twin demons of destruction who must be overthrown by force of arms (November 9); in a *Times* editorial of November 25, which was one long plea to Japan to give up its war with China, and concentrate instead on dealing with the U.S.S.R.; and in the series of articles by American writers in the *Daily Telegraph*, the point of which was to insinuate that German businessmen and Britain have a common interest—in protecting Europe against Bolshevism—while “this war is a civil war to force Germany back into western civilisation, because she has opened Europe to Asia.”

Finland the key to Moscow

The Soviet Union would have been mad to take no notice of all this. To have ignored the reality about Finnish “democracy.” To have ignored the fact that the real rulers of Finland—the “rabidly anti-Russian Army”—were only concerned to discover which imperialist they should open the door to first. The Soviet Union would have been mad to forget what the *Times* itself wrote, on April 17, 1919:

“So far as stamping out the Bolshevik is concerned, we might as well send expeditions to Honolulu as to the White Sea. If we look at the map, we shall find that the best approach to Petrograd is from the Baltic, and that the shortest and easiest route is through Finland . . . Finland is the key to Petrograd and Petrograd is the key to Moscow.”

The Soviet Government did not try to secure itself against such a possibility by war. It tried negotiations. It asked for the frontier north of Leningrad to be moved back 15 to 20 miles, the northern frontier to be moved back a little further

away from Murmansk, three or four small islands to the east of Kronstadt to be transferred to the U.S.S.R., and a base given to the U.S.S.R. on the south-west dip of Finland, covering the approach to the Gulf. In exchange for this, the Soviet Union offered double the territory ceded, cultivated land and valuable forests in Soviet Karelia; that very Karelia which the Finnish nationalists have always declared should belong to Finland, and which they raided in 1921 and 1922. Moreover, the U.S.S.R. offered demilitarisation of the frontier, consent to the fortification of the Aaland Islands, and a valuable trade agreement.

The capitalist papers raised an outcry about these demands being backed by a monstrous concentration of Soviet troops: but not even the Finnish Government attempted to confirm this lie. The same papers cried out that this meant destroying the independence of Finland, putting her under Russia's thumb. True, the examples of Egypt, China, Turkey and Persia during the last fifty years have given ample proof that such concessions do mean enslavement, when given to an imperialist Power, i.e., one governed by bankers with money to invest in profitable sources of raw materials, and by manufacturers with opium, hardware, or cotton goods to force upon backward races. But the Soviet Union has no such interests. The U.S.S.R. gave military help to Turkey in 1922, and economic help in after years, without any attempt to dominate the country. It has again and again given military assistance to Mongolia, a country even weaker than Finland, without once attempting to force the Mongolian People's Republic along paths which the Mongolian people themselves are not ready to follow. To-day the U.S.S.R. has garrisons, naval and air bases on the territories of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania; but the internal affairs of these countries are their own, and their foreign policy is also their own.

Negotiations stop : Provocations begin

Similarly, the terms offered to Finland were terms which, while safeguarding Soviet security, did not threaten

Finland in the least. But they did close the door which Mannerheim and the Germans had opened in 1918, and which Mr. Chamberlain and Hitler, as we have seen, joined in trying to keep open in 1939. And that is why the Finnish Government allowed the most unscrupulous campaign to develop around these terms, and why the whole issue has been distorted and misrepresented, particularly in the British and American press.

On top of this political provocation came armed provocation—shells “accidentally” dropping in the midst of Soviet troops, machine guns “accidentally” firing across the frontier, raiding parties “accidentally” finding themselves outside Soviet outposts. This was nothing new to Finnish practice, as we have seen. But at such a time as the present it would have indeed been a case of the “rabbit assaulting the stoat” if we were to suppose that the Finnish militarists did this on their own initiative. One can only assume that they were relying in their military provocation on support from the same quarters which for weeks, months and years has been supporting them in every political provocation.

The Prime Minister of Great Britain asserted in the House of Commons on November 30, that “late last night M. Molotov broadcast a statement in the course of which he is officially reported as having denied the suggestion, which he attributed to the foreign press, that a Soviet attack on Finland was intended. Yet, only a few hours after this broadcast, it is understood that Soviet forces have invaded Finnish territory.” Mr. Chamberlain must have been aware of the true text of M. Molotov’s statement which was a clear warning that “the High Command of the Red Army has ordered the Army and Navy to be in readiness for any eventuality, in order to prevent possible fresh provocations by the Finnish militarists.” Mr. Chamberlain must also have been aware that, at 2 a.m., at 3.15 a.m. and at 4 a.m. the next day, the Soviet frontier had been violated and Soviet troops were attacked at several places by Finnish raiders.

The papers have talked of the non-aggression Pact between Finland and the U.S.S.R. That Pact contains a provision

that it would not be binding on either signatory if the other party attacked someone else. Why should it be expected that the U.S.S.R. should regard the Pact as binding if the other Party attacked, not someone else, but the U.S.S.R. itself? To talk of six months’ notice in such conditions is an insult to anyone’s intelligence—particularly when one has all the evidence brought forward in this pamphlet (and doubtless a great deal more) to show that the Finnish Government on this occasion, as on so many others, was acting on behalf of someone else.

The Democratic People’s Republic of Finland

That someone else will never find the road into the Baltic again. The gate across the road has been slammed by the Soviet Union. Events as we write suggest that the Finnish workers and peasants, after twenty-one years of enslavement by capitalist, landlord and militarist “democracy,” are going at last to get the chance to defend the gates for themselves in the shape of the Democratic People’s Republic of Finland.

On November 30 the Government headed by Cajander, who had been leading the resistance to the Soviet proposals, was reconstituted. This gentleman was dropped; Ryti, President of the Bank of Finland (in other words the Finnish Montagu Norman) became premier, with Tanner, a “Social Democrat” who had been associated with the fascist government of Finland for many years, and had opposed the Soviet proposals in the recent negotiations, as Foreign Minister.

It was perfectly obvious that this reconstituted government represented precisely the same foreign interests as the previous one. The army remains under Mannerheim, the man who was successively decorated, for services rendered, by the Tsar, the Kaiser and the King of England!

Small wonder therefore that the Soviet Government refused to negotiate with this Ryti group, and decided to recognise the Provisional Government that was set up on December 1, headed by the Communist Kuusinen. This Provisional Government issued a manifesto calling for “a

wide front of the entire working class, peasantry, handicraftsmen, small trades, and working intellectuals— that is to say, the enormous majority of the Finnish people,” and stated its programme.

Its Programme and Treaty with U.S.S.R.

The programme is designed once and for all to break the power of foreign capital over the Finnish people; to establish a really democratic system, with a People's Army, and State control over big private banks and big industrial enterprises, confiscation of the big landed estates, improved conditions for the workers, and assistance to the peasants and middle-sized and small enterprises.

The Government of the U.S.S.R. has concluded a treaty of mutual assistance and friendship with the provisional Finnish Government, under which the Soviet Union agrees to transfer 27,000 square miles of Soviet Karelia—the districts inhabited mainly by Karelians, who are akin to the Finns—to the democratic Republic of Finland. Finland agrees to transfer 1,533 square miles of the Isthmus of Karelia to the Soviet Union, thus drawing the frontier further away from Leningrad, which up to now has been within artillery range of the Finnish frontier. Finland also agrees to lease to the Soviet Union the Hango peninsula and to sell a number of islands in the Gulf of Finland, also some land in the North, so that the Soviet Union can establish naval bases protecting the approaches to Leningrad and to Murmansk.

The formation of the Finnish Provisional Government, and the treaty it has concluded with the Government of the U.S.S.R., mark a new era of freedom and security for the people of Finland. That this is not to the liking of the capitalists of other countries is obvious from the campaign of hate that has been carried on in the press. But there will be no worker and no lover of peace and social progress who will not appreciate the enormous advance that the change implies for Finland itself. For the first time it will be really independent, and for the first time the people of Finland will really decide their own destiny.

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